



For Immediate Release  
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## **Agreements Signed by Washington and British Columbia**

### **Passport Requirements**

B.C. Premier Gordon Campbell and Washington Governor Chris Gregoire signed a joint letter to the Canadian and American federal governments reiterating the need to address the detrimental effect of the planned new documentation requirements for people crossing the border.

The United States is currently planning to implement the new passport requirement for air and sea travel by January 2007, and for land crossings by January 2008. A poll released in March found that approximately one third of Americans and Canadians who live near the border said they are less likely to cross the border if they need a passport and they would be unlikely to purchase a new border ID card.

Premier Campbell and Governor Gregoire are calling on the federal governments to reduce the impact of the uncertainty on cross-border tourism, conventions and border communities, particularly in the run-up to the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Games, by agreeing on a realistic implementation schedule and a clear plan to communicate the new requirements to the public.

The letter also suggests the possible expansion of already agreed upon forms of secure documentation like the NEXUS card. It also calls upon the federal governments to work on North American perimeter clearance by developing and simplifying harmonized procedures for intercepting inadmissible people and goods before they enter North America, which would reduce the need for screening and identification at the Canada-U.S. border.

A new B.C.-Washington Working Group has also been established to examine and improve current foundational documents issued by the state and province (such as driver's licenses) using innovative technologies that will protect identity and privacy while strengthening security. The joint letter invites both federal governments to participate in that working group.

### **Emergency Management**

B.C. and Washington today signed Annex B of the Pacific Northwest Emergency Management Arrangement (PNEMA). The PNEMA was originally signed in 1996 by the governors of Washington, Alaska, Idaho and Oregon and the premiers of B.C. and the Yukon Territory. B.C. and

Washington are the first signatories to Annex B, which updates the PNEMA and provides for the co-ordination of resources and support during emergencies.

The signing of Annex B reflects the ongoing commitment of provincial and state emergency management officials to share information and resources in response to events like the cross-border wildfires in the summer of 2003. It recognizes that B.C. and Washington share natural hazard concerns such as wildfires, major earthquakes and flood and drought issues related to cross-border rivers. It also recognizes that the two jurisdictions share infrastructure vulnerabilities such as power grids, natural gas pipelines and transportation corridors.

## **Public Health**

B.C. and Washington today signed a new Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on Public Health Emergencies. Since 2004, the Washington Department of Health and the B.C. Ministry of Health have jointly sponsored an annual Cross-Border Public Health Workshop on emerging public health issues such as pandemic influenza. These workshops have reinforced the need to formalize existing informal collaboration agreements and today's MOU is a response to that identified need.

Under the MOU, both parties agree to undertake a collaborative approach to use available health resources to prepare for, respond to and recover from public health emergencies. The MOU provides a framework for future collaboration, including providing mutual assistance in the event of a public health emergency.

## **Transportation**

B.C. and Washington today signed a new B.C.-Washington Transportation Protocol Agreement to improve cross-border transportation. The protocol commits both jurisdictions to improve communication on incidents that affect cross-border travel.

The protocol also commits B.C. and Washington to support greater use of Intelligent Transportation Systems at the border. The governments of B.C. and Canada have recently invested over \$220 million in infrastructure at and approaching the border, and the governments of Washington and the United States have and are planning significant investments in highway infrastructure leading to B.C. To build on those investments, B.C. and Washington will explore the wider use of Intelligent Transportation Systems such as:

- “e-seals” applied to trucks after loading at ports to facilitate trans-shipment across the border in conjunction with other intelligent border crossing initiatives;
- Electronic delivery of manifests to customs and border agents prior to the physical arrival of trucks at border crossings;
- Expansion of advanced traveler information systems to provide commercial and passenger wait times at border crossings and travel time information for popular trip destinations such as Vancouver, Bellingham, and the Tsawwassen ferry terminal; and
- Traveler information for the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games in Vancouver.

The protocol signed today will also see both governments work with their respective federal border agencies to increase the number of travelers using existing secure documentation programs like NEXUS and FAST.

NEXUS is a joint customs and immigration program for frequent travelers implemented by the Canadian and American governments and is designed to simplify border crossings for pre-approved, low-risk travelers. With over 50,000 NEXUS users in B.C., the B.C.-Washington region has the highest NEXUS enrolment of anywhere along the Canada-U.S. border. Possible steps to increase NEXUS participation could include exploring the use of a NEXUS card as an acceptable alternative form of identification to the passport or proposed PASS card, and making the NEXUS card cheaper or even free as a cost-efficient incentive to streamline passage for low-risk travelers.

The FAST program is a commercial process intended to facilitate shipments by pre-approved shippers and carriers using FAST-registered drivers. Possible steps to expand FAST participation could include building new FAST lanes so FAST-approved trucks and drivers would not have to wait in general lines, and simplifying the complicated approval requirements for shippers and drivers without compromising security.

Under the new protocol, B.C. and Washington will conduct a new border circulation study for commercial and passenger vehicles to help determine the improvements necessary at border crossings and related highways to meet increased border traffic in the future.

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